UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/821
1 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION FOR EASTERN SLAVONIA, BARANJA AND WESTERN SIRMIUM

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 1037 (1996) of 15 January 1996, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, on the completion of demilitarization of the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (hereafter referred to as the region), to report monthly to the Council regarding the activities of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and the implementation by the parties of the Basic Agreement of 12 November 1995 (A/50/757-S/1995/951). My most recent report on this matter was submitted to the Council on 28 August 1996 (S/1996/705).

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

2. The normalization of relations between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has allowed the process of political transition in the region to gain momentum. Various initiatives by UNTAES have sought to sustain progress in this regard. However, in conjunction with these positive steps towards reintegration, UNTAES is facing three related challenges: unwillingness to move forward on the part of some of the Serb leaders in the region, certain bureaucratic obstructions on the Croatian side and, as a consequence, a continued feeling of uncertainty among residents of the region.

3. Since its initial deployment in the region, UNTAES has performed the role of political intermediary between the local Serb authorities and the Croatian Government. By August, the reintegration process had entered a new political and administrative phase which required direct contact between the parties to resolve their outstanding differences and reduce mistrust and suspicion. The Transitional Administrator has accordingly initiated a series of direct contacts between them. While the commencement of such contacts, particularly on issues as important as the Amnesty Law, has highlighted differences between the two sides, the establishment of constructive and engaged dialogue is a positive development.

4. These meetings gave Serb representatives the opportunity to voice directly their concerns about the inadequacies of the previous Amnesty Law, and to offer comments on the draft of a revised Amnesty Law, which was subsequently amended before enactment on 20 September. The new Amnesty Law is a significant step forward and, if applied in a fair and equitable manner, should provide a positive basis for further steps towards reconciliation. Nevertheless, on the Serb side, attempts continue to be made to block practical progress in the Joint Implementation Committees and on individual projects until there is clear resolution of all outstanding matters, including the status and functions of the Serb community's joint Council of Municipalities; and the duration of the UNTAES mandate. This obstruction, by delaying the benefits of orderly integration and encouraging extremists on the other side who already point to cases of Serb intransigence, can only work to the detriment of Serbs in the region.

5. On the Croatian side, constructive and innovative initiatives by the office responsible for reintegration are being slowed down by various ministries in Zagreb. On 19 September, the Transitional Administrator met with the Croatian Prime Minister to draw his attention to some disturbing cases of inadequate cooperation, including undue delays in processing applications for Croatian citizenship and other documents. Despite the obstructionism of some Serb leaders in the region, there are many in the local population willing to cooperate with the transition process in the hope that their fears and uncertainties will be overcome during the course of the UNTAES mandate. In the document centres organized by UNTAES Civil Affairs and opened on 20 August in Beli Manastir, and now functioning also in Ilok, Vukovar, Batina and Lua, demand far exceeds processing capacity, with reports from some offices of queues of hundreds of applicants forming from the early morning hours. Approximately one third of the applicants have been Serbs, and this percentage is rising. According to figures compiled by UNTAES Civil Affairs, however, as of 30 September, out of more than 11,500 applications submitted for a variety of Croatian documents, only 2,768 documents had been received by the applicants, constituting only about one quarter of the applications.

6. The Transitional Administrator also raised the failure of the Croatian Government to honour in a timely fashion its commitments under the Agreement on Interim Co-financing of Public Services in the region, signed on 8 August 1996, to provide 4.5 million kuna per month for the financing of public services in the region. The monthly payment due on 10 September had not been received as of 1 October 1996. It will be recalled that, in its presidential statement of 15 August 1996, the Security Council noted with appreciation the conclusion of that Agreement between the Government of Croatia and UNTAES (S/PRST/1996/35).

7. The success of the market days, described in my previous report (S/1996/705, para. 22), is seen in the fact that they now draw 8,000 people each Saturday they are held. They are primarily opportunities for meetings of families and friends, and the ongoing programme of family reunions, in which over 13,000 people have participated, is evidence of a gradual improvement in individual relations between substantial numbers of Serbs and Croats. However, at some Croatian official levels and particularly among displaced persons organizations, hostile rhetoric, nationalist propaganda and mass demonstrations are poisoning the atmosphere for reconciliation among people who, at the end of the transitional period, must live in the area as equal citizens of Croatia.

While the impatience of displaced persons to return to their homes is understandable, the vociferous expression of that impatience and the unwillingness to take into account a realistic timetable for return is itself a source of local insecurity and an impediment to early return. In the course of public demonstrations, throughout September, various Croatian organizations have pressed both UNTAES and the Croatian Government to hold the elections in December 1996 and urged the early termination of the UNTAES mandate, despite the fact that the basic conditions for free and fair elections do not yet exist.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

8. The military situation in the region has remained generally calm and stable. The UNTAES military presence continues to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security and to reassure the local population. In addition to their task of ensuring demilitarization, UNTAES military units have played an important role in the humanitarian sphere, including supervision of demining efforts, provision of medical treatment in certain cases and assistance in humanitarian relief and medical evacuations. Close air support training missions by the Implementation Force (IFOR) were successfully undertaken and scheduled training is to be doubled in October.

IV. CIVILIAN ASPECTS

9. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNTAES Civil Affairs has been making steady progress in preparing for and facilitating the return of both Croat and Serb displaced persons to their homes. The first individual returns of Serbs have already taken place. Ten persons in three families have left the region to return to Western Slavonia. The number of such returns should increase in the coming weeks as progress is made on the issuance of documents. In the four pilot villages in the southern part of the region, demining of the village centres is completed and reconstruction is well under way. The first return of Croats to these communities should occur in the next several weeks. Demining of the more populous villages in the central and northern portions of the region has been delayed as the modalities of joint Croatian-Serb demining operations, funded entirely by the Government of Croatia, were being negotiated. These modalities have now been agreed and, barring any further obstacles or changes of position by either side, demining should be under way in all the pilot communities by the first week of October. Meanwhile, concerted efforts have been undertaken to prepare these communities - particularly Bilje, Ernestinovo and Antunovac - for the demining, reconstruction and return operations to come.

10. The Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) process has recently encountered problems in some key areas. While a breakthrough was achieved in the Joint Implementation Committee on Agriculture when Croatian financing was arranged for the autumn planting, and progress has continued more or less unabated on the restoration of public services and infrastructure, there has been no progress on the transition of school curricula and post-transition employment in the health field. In view of persistent difficulties, the Transitional Administrator decided on 16 September to replace the Joint Implementation Committee on

Education with an independent body chaired by UNTAES and consisting of one expert from each side. In the public utilities subcommittees, Serb concerns about re-employment in public enterprises have emerged, despite the so far successful re-employment by INA at the Djelotovci oilfield of 65 Serbs, who have been paid Croatian salaries without incident for the past month. In addition, virtually all remaining joint implementation committees will be refocused on concrete reintegration timetables and activities. Separately, both sides have agreed to the establishment of a small senior executive group chaired by the Transitional Administrator which will meet weekly to accelerate progress in key areas.

Transitional Police Force

11. The operational effectiveness of the Transitional Police Force has shown steady improvement. Of the present strength of 1,337, 131 are Croats. An additional 70 Croats are undergoing training to join the Force. A new Transitional Police Force station has been established in Lipovac to provide confidence to returning Croat displaced persons and the Croatian Government has provided additional vehicles and other equipment to improve the ability of the Force to carry out its tasks. Cooperation between the local Serb and Croat co-commanders of the Force has continued to improve. However, some Serb members remain unwilling to participate actively in the apprehension of certain criminal elements and will not exercise their duties in relation to matters which have political implications in the region; this issue is being addressed at senior levels. The failure of the Croatian Government to provide funds from which to pay August salaries in a timely manner seriously undermined the morale and confidence that UNTAES has worked hard to engender. The salaries were eventually paid in the last week of September by using, in part, funds provided by the local Serb authorities.

Border monitoring

12. More efficient enforcement of the customs regime by the local customs authorities under the supervision of UNTAES border monitors at the eight international crossing points has seen an increase in regional revenue over the past three months from 1.6 million dinars (approximately $300,000) to 3.7 million dinars (approximately $740,000). The next step will be the introduction of Croatian laws and institutions into the international border regime. High-level technical discussions between the Croatian ministries of Finance and of the Interior, UNTAES and the local Serb authorities are ongoing with a view to the establishment of a joint customs/immigration service commencing in November.

Public affairs

13. Negotiations have been successfully completed for the expansion of UNTAES radio programming on Radio Vukovar from the present one hour to three hours daily. A mobile distribution and information office established at the weekly UNTAES market has broadened public outreach to the population on both sides. The UNTAES public affairs unit organized a series of meetings at the level of editor-in-chief and directors between the local Serb radio and television media and their Croatian counterparts. The mission also organized regular briefings

for the team from the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia which is conducting exhumations at the mass grave at Ovcara, and provided guidance on their contacts with Croatian, local Serb and international media.

Mass graves

14. Staff engaged by the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Physicians for Human Rights began the exhumation of the mass grave at Ovcara on 1 September. As of 21 September, they had uncovered but not yet removed between 25 and 30 bodies. By the end of the month, they intend to transport the first bodies to a facility at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Medicine for forensic examination.

V. OBSERVATIONS

15. UNTAES continues on track as the region enters a new phase of reintegration. The complex policy and administrative issues that now need to be addressed can only be resolved through direct contacts between the parties themselves. The beginning of a process of direct contact is therefore an encouraging development. This will become increasingly essential in order to reach agreement on many outstanding policy questions, including on issues which will determine when meaningful and successful elections can be held.

16. For these questions to be settled, the parties must improve their level of cooperation with UNTAES and take positive steps to foster a constructive atmosphere for further progress. On the Croatian side, this requires the prompt meeting of its financial commitments for the provision of public services in the region; substantial acceleration in the issuance of citizenship documents; and a clear information campaign aimed at explaining to its citizens the remaining steps required for a successful reintegration of the region and its population into Croatia. I am concerned by the unwillingness of the Government of Croatia to take steps to inform its population fully of the obligations it assumed when signing the Basic Agreement with regard to the UNTAES mandate, including the rights of residents of the region, and by the fact that unrealistic demands by politically active groups are left unchallenged by government officials. I urge the Government to take more energetic steps to foster a political and public atmosphere conducive to confidence-building and, consequently, to the fulfilment of the UNTAES mandate.

17. On the Serb side, obstructionist attitudes of some hardline elements in the local leadership are squandering opportunities to secure firm commitments for job security, economic development, the orderly return of Croat displaced persons, the long-term protection of human rights and the preservation of the multi-ethnic character of the region. Those who seek to slow down the pace of reintegration should be aware that a substantial lack of cooperation by either party could lead to the early termination of the United Nations Transitional Administration of the region. The wisest course for those who have taken on the responsibility of leading their people is full cooperation with UNTAES and constructive engagement with the Government of Croatia.

UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/822
2 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 1 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANGOLA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a message from Mr. Venancio de Moura, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Angola, dated 5 September 1996, with the request that it be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alfonso VAN-DUNEM "MBINDA"
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

96-26052 (E) 021096 031096

/...

Annex

Message dated 5 September 1996 from the Minister of External Relations of Angola addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

Aware of the interest that you and the international community have in seeing peace restored to Angola, where the United Nations has the largest contingent of peacekeeping forces, on which it spends over one million dollars a day, I undertook to provide you with the following information about the latest developments and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which is once again at a critical juncture owing to the lack of political will and perhaps bad faith of the leadership of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA).

In fact, UNITA puts the following conditions on the conclusion of the resolution of the critical issues set forth in the Lusaka Protocol:

(a) Military issues. The return of UNITA Generals to the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) in the number agreed upon; the quartering and selection of genuine UNITA military force members to be incorporated into the Angolan single Armed Forces; and the withdrawal of troops from UNITA-occupied areas, in order to allow the reinstatement of the State administration in the whole country;

(b) Political issues. The return of the UNITA members of Parliament who left in 1992; the designation of individuals with the necessary background to be part of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation; and the special status or accommodation of the UNITA leader.

As you are aware, the Angolan Head of State had invited the UNITA leader in writing, over six months ago (on 1 March 1996), to fill one of the positions as Vice-President of the Republic. Therefore, there were high expectations, when the UNITA Congress was held on 28 August 1996 that UNITA would provide the answers to all the pending political and military issues and would create the conditions for the fifth meeting between the President of the Republic and the UNITA leader, inside Angolan territory. The resolutions of the recent UNITA Congress and the statements made by the UNITA leader himself, who rejected publicly the position of Vice-President of the Republic unexpectedly, further increased the mistrust and doubts about the real intentions of the UNITA leadership and the UNITA leader, who seems to be more interested in delaying the conclusion of the implementation of the Lusaka Accords and buying more time, while the economic and social situation of the country deteriorates, in order to cause disorder and instability within the country. And that would have all kinds of consequences, including discouraging foreign investors who might want to participate in the Angolan National Reconstruction Plan on a mutually advantageous basis, as well as hindering the efforts of the Government towards the implementation of programmes intended to promote the well-being of the different communities and of all those who live in our country and bet on its future development.

The Angolan Government reiterates its firm political willingness to solve, through dialogue, the problems of reconciliation of all Angolans, in order to maintain stability and unity within the country, based on respect for differences and for the democratic law instituted in our country since 1992.

The Angolan Government has responsibilities towards the Angolan people and towards the community of independent and sovereign States. It recognizes that this community has contributed with considerable financial and human efforts, beyond what was provided for initially, to create the conditions for the re-establishment of peace. However, those efforts have been stalled because of non-compliance on the part of UNITA, which dares attack with impunity members of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission III (UNAVEM III) and its aircraft. As you are aware, the UNAVEM III mission is due to end on 9 February 1997, pursuant to a Security Council resolution, by which the Council approved the deployment of a contingent of more than 7,000 Blue Helmets from over 50 countries in the world.

Now that the maximum offer (Vice-President of the Republic) made by the Government to the UNITA leader has been refused, all we have to do is to continue to implement the Lusaka Protocol, the validity of which was, by the way, reconfirmed by UNITA at its Third Extraordinary Congress. Thus, considering the responsibilities that the Security Council has in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, the Angolan Government deems that the time has come for effective measures to be applied to put an end to the manoeuvring and ambiguous actions of the UNITA leader, who seems to have a secret agenda for Angola.

The ambiguities contained in the statements by the UNITA leader, and the fact that he disappointed even those who believed in him, suggest that Mr. Savimbi is just waiting for the opportunity to reject formally his participation in the democratic game, and once again incite people to violence and insubordination to then rule over an unruly country.

Thus, it is imperative that the Security Council do the following: cut the UNITA support mechanisms; apply those sanctions imposed by and approved in its own resolutions; freeze all UNITA bank accounts; order the closing of all UNITA offices in all United Nations Member States, wherever they may exist; prohibit the issuance of passports and visas by States Members of the United Nations; and prevent UNITA leaders from staying and travelling in the territory of States Members of the United Nations, as UNITA does in Angola when it prevents the free movement of people and goods in the areas under its control, where the other opposition parties, the Government and even UNAVEM III peacekeeping forces and the personnel of non-governmental organizations cannot travel readily. Furthermore, the Security Council must be firm in its warnings, as well as in the application of sanctions against those States Members of the United Nations which are neighbours of Angola and which grant landing and other facilities to aircraft carrying and introducing weapons and various logistic military equipment in Angola for UNITA; and cut UNITA's communications with the world. Finally, trips by officers from States Members of the United Nations to Bailundo or Andulo (except for those directly involved in the peace process) should be limited in order to avoid giving the impression of the existence of two capital

cities in Angola, not to mention to avoid facilitating and encouraging one of Mr. Savimbi's claims: the split of the country into north and south.

Only by taking a firm stand and exercising effective pressure can UNITA and its leader be forced to abide by the decisions of the Security Council and honour the commitments that it (UNITA) made on its own before the Angolan people and the international community.

The Angolan Government shall remain flexible and patient; however, it will take a firm position when it comes to keeping order and safeguarding the integrity of its national territory. It will make efforts to maintain a serious political dialogue in order to conclude, within the appropriate schedule, the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, and thus be able to lead Angola into a situation of stability and harmony, and use all of its financial and human resources for the social and economic development of the country. Therefore, only by complying with the rule of law, with democratic principles and with the laws approved by democratically elected institutions, can we have a peaceful Angola where everyone can live in peace.

I am convinced that you, in particular, and your Government in general, will continue to support the efforts of this legitimate, democratically elected Government. I would like, therefore, to ask you personally to use your power of persuasion to facilitate the successful conclusion, before the end of the year, of the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

Venancio de MOURA
Minister for External Relations

UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/823
2 October 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

LETTER DATED 1 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you that at 1530 hours on 26 September 1996, two Iraqi patrol boats carrying out their duties in our territorial waters at coordinates 140205 came under fire from two Kuwaiti patrol boats of the Viper class, which were equipped with machine-guns. Five soldiers were aboard each Kuwaiti boat. After firing, they proceeded towards the Kuwaiti side.

I would request you to intervene with Kuwait in order to bring an end to such hostile acts, carried out repeatedly against Iraqi vessels, which constitute unjustified provocation and are in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. These acts create tension in this part of the region and are not conducive to stability.

I reaffirm the legitimate right of the Republic of Iraq to compensation for the losses sustained as a consequence of this hostile act, in accordance with the principle of international responsibility.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

96-26154 (E) 031096 031096 041096

UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/824
3 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 3 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to write to you pursuant to my previous letter dated 23 September 1996 (S/1996/774) regarding the recent infiltration into the Republic of Korea by armed commandos from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a military submarine.

I would first like to provide you with an update on the situation. In the time since my last letter, two more North Korean commandos have been killed in an exchange of fire with the Republic of Korea Army, which, including the 11 found dead, executed by their own cohorts, brings the total number of North Korean deaths to 22. In addition to the one commando captured alive, we assume that three North Korean commandos remain at large. In the course of the firefights, nine lives have been lost on our side, including one civilian, and 22 Republic of Korea Army soldiers have been wounded. A large-scale search operation continues for the remaining intruders.

On various occasions, including at the newly convened General Assembly meeting, North Korea has continued to allege that the submarine, while on a routine training mission, experienced engine trouble and ran aground after drifting in the East Sea. They persist in this claim despite the abundance of concrete evidence and technical findings that clearly prove that this is nothing but pure fabrication. Moreover, North Korea not only denounces the Republic of Korea for attacking their allegedly unarmed soldiers, but absurdly claims that, as victims, they have the right to retaliate against us.

As I made clear at the consultations held by members of the Security Council on 20 and 24 September, as well as through the aforementioned letter, we believe it is now incumbent upon the Government of the Republic of Korea to bring this issue before the Council. For this reason, my Government strongly believes that appropriate action by the Council on the issue is now in order.

Most importantly, I wish to reiterate that my Government is extremely concerned that this incident reflects a clear pattern of military provocations by North Korea against the Republic of Korea, and forms part of a larger scheme

not only to dismantle the Korean Armistice Agreement but also to destabilize the Republic of Korea.

It is therefore important for the international community to send a clear and strong signal to North Korea that further provocations on its part will not be tolerated.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) PARK Soo Gil
Permanent Representative

UNITED NATIONS **A S**

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/447
S/1996/825
3 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Agenda items 33 and 35
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 2 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a declaration issued on 1 October by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on the subject of the Middle East peace process (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33 and 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) John H. F. CAMPBELL
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Declaration made on 1 October 1996 by the European Union on the Middle East peace process

[Original: English and French]

The Council of Ministers of the European Union is appalled by the recent violence and the resulting casualties in Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It offers its sincere condolences to the families of those Palestinians and Israelis who have lost their lives, and its sympathy to the injured.

The European Union strongly calls upon both parties to abide by United Nations Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) of 28 September 1996. The European Union calls upon both the Israeli authorities and the Palestinians to exercise the utmost restraint and to refrain from any actions or words that might lead to further violence. It urges both sides to avoid resorting to disproportionate force, in particular the use of firearms, tanks and helicopter gunships. It calls on the Government of Israel to prevent its forces from re-entering autonomous areas in Zone A, contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Interim Agreement. It further calls on the Palestinian Authority to exert full control over Palestinian forces and to maintain calm in the autonomous area.

The Troika has discussed the Union's concerns at meetings in New York with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and in Luxembourg with President Yasser Arafat.

The European Union recognizes that the recent incidents were precipitated by frustration and exasperation at the absence of any real progress in the peace process and firmly believes that the absence of such progress is the root of the unrest. It calls on Israel to match its stated commitment to the peace process with concrete actions to fulfil its obligations, as well as to refrain from any action likely to create mistrust about its intentions.

The Union notes that the particular events that triggered the current crisis concerned the fears of Palestinians that their position in Jerusalem was being further eroded. The Union recalls that parties have agreed, under the terms of the Declaration of Principles, not to take any action that would prejudge the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. It will work to ensure that this commitment is implemented by both sides. Following Security Council resolution 1073 (1996), the Union believes that it would help greatly to restore calm and confidence if the Hasmonean tunnel in Jerusalem were restored to its original state. It furthermore calls for the cessation and reversal of all acts that may affect the status of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

The European Union reaffirms its policy on the status of Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition

of territory by force, and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The Union asserts that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation.

The Council stresses the importance of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement, which is based on a common commitment to the peace process. In this context it calls on Israel to give clear practical demonstration of its confirmed intention to implement fully the agreements already reached with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Union believes that urgent progress in the following areas is crucial to the peace process:

(a) Timely implementation of the agreements reached, including completion of the first phase of Israel's troop redeployment, notably from Hebron, and the release of Palestinian prisoners;

(b) Positive steps to alleviate the economic plight of the Palestinians, including the early lifting of the closures, guaranteeing safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank and the lifting of obstacles to international aid efforts and the realization of infrastructural projects (e.g. Gaza airport, Gaza harbour, industrial zones);

(c) Resumption of full cooperation in order to ensure internal security both in Israel and the areas under Palestinian authority;

(d) Refraining from measures that prejudice the outcome of the final status negotiations, including annexation of land, demolition of houses, new settlement construction and expansion of settlements;

(e) Engagement of the next stage of negotiations as set down in the Declaration of Principles.

The Union welcomes the initiative to host a meeting in Washington between the parties. It hopes this meeting will lead to the recommencement of constructive negotiations on the basis of the principles of Madrid and the terms of the Declaration of Principles.

The security partnership that was created between Israel and the Palestinians has been one of the main achievements of the peace process. We call on both sides to dedicate themselves to recovering the trust and cooperation that epitomized the spirit of the peace process. Now more than ever the Union encourages the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to cooperate at all levels. Good neighbourly policies are indispensable to Israel's security in the long term. That security can be found only on the basis of a renewed partnership between Israel and its Palestinian neighbours.

As it declared at the Florence European Council in June 1996, peace in the Middle East is a vital interest of the European Union. Accordingly, the Union is ready to play an active part in efforts to recommence the negotiations,

commensurate with its interests in the region, and on the basis of its major contribution to the peace process so far. The Union is currently preparing a Ministerial Troika visit to the Middle East for talks with the main parties in the peace process.